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FREEDOM CONFERRED ONLY BY THE GOSPEL.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN NEW-YORK, OCT. 3, 1832,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

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S E R M O N .

JOHN viii. 36.

If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

IN this world truth and error are struggling for victory. The field of contest is the human intellect. The prize contended for is man, immortal man; and it is his destiny either to be bound for ever in the chains of error, or to be led forth in eternal freedom and glory by the hand of truth. From the earliest times this conflict has been going on; the war is still waging; nor will it cease, until delusion shall lose its hold of the human mind, and the kingdom of truth and righteousness be established throughout the earth. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming from heaven, brought the truth to men in order to liberate them from the miserable bondage of sin. It is implied in his instructions connected with the text, that all other supposed methods of freeing men from the servitude of error and iniquity are ineffectual. *If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* The point here set before us is, that THE GOSPEL IS THE ONLY POWER, WHICH CAN DISENTHRALL ENSLAVED MAN, AND BESTOW UPON HIM THE FREEDOM OF HOLINESS AND JOY.

I. In attempting to establish this position I shall first consider the inadequacy of the other influences, which have been supposed to have an important bearing on the welfare of the world.

1. The power of *Civilization* is feeble in the contest with moral and natural evil. Although the contrast is very striking between a barbarous and civilized state, and although the descriptions, which have been given of the Arcadian simplicity and innocence of the children of nature, have been found to be mere romance; yet the blessings of civilization are often very limited, and fail to remove the evils, by which the family of man are afflicted. In the result of civilization we may see the deep spirit of revenge and the secret blow of retaliation yielding to the power of law. Many domestic and social virtues may spring up. Many conveniences and luxuries, before untasted, may be enjoyed. But civilization has not the effect of removing the most cruel superstition and degrading idolatry. The most refined of the nations of antiquity were the worshippers of gods of every name and form, often with rites of indescribable turpitude. The very governments themselves, which had been established, supported idolatry, and bound the people to it by chains, which could be broken only by the power of God. Even now there are nations highly civilized, where yet the people are the wretched thralls of superstition and the most deplorable idolatry.

Besides this, there have prevailed and still prevail among civilized states very gross and flagrant vices, and sometimes enormous crimes are tolerated. The government established is perhaps a grinding tyranny;

and although the subject may be shielded against injuries from a fellow-subject, yet all may be in the power of a proud master, accustomed to indulge his passions without restraint and without fear. What can be more wonderful, than to see civilized nations punishing with merited death the midnight assassin or solitary murderer, and yet eagerly and for slight occasions arraying themselves for battle, rushing upon each other with hideous shouts, with the ferocity of wild beasts and the malignity of devils, and in the shock falling together by thousands in a miserable death? What can be more astonishing than this, excepting that the civilized survivors agree to obliterate from their minds the thought of *murder*, and speak only of noble bearing, and heroic resistance, and glorious victory? Yet such has been the custom of civilized nations in all ages.

2. The progress of *Mechanical Ingenuity* is incompetent to secure the happiness of the human family. Never has the power of mind over matter been so wonderfully displayed as in the present age. The elements are now made to perform, with the greatest rapidity, the work, which was formerly done by the slow and tedious labor of human hands. The superintendence of one person, with the aid of water and fire, now brings out results, which formerly required the toil of thousands. Millions of little wheels, apparently self-moved, are spinning the threads, which by shuttles, seemingly thrown by invisible hands, are woven into the finest webs. The old method of travelling by the fleetness of horses is going out of repute, and three or four times the former speed is now gained by the

power of steam. Whether the same power will unyoke our oxen from the plough, we are not yet able to determine. Many, however, are cherishing high hopes of the improvement of the human race, from the progress of mechanical philosophy. It has been thought, that human hands will be so freed from the necessity of labor, that ample leisure will be furnished to the great mass of mankind for intellectual culture, and thus that a new aspect will be given to the condition of the world. Will these hopes be realized?

The accumulation and general diffusion of wealth in the community will indeed release many hands from labor; but the leisure enjoyed may be abused to purposes of luxurious and criminal indulgence, and *will be*, without the restraint of moral and religious principle. Besides, there are very obvious limits to this anticipated release from manual industry. Almost all the hundreds of millions, who are nourished on the earth, are dependent for their food on the careful, toiling hand of agriculture. The ground must be cultivated; the seeds cast into the furrow; the fruits of harvest gathered. Mechanical improvements will not repeal the sentence passed upon man,—*Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.*

Were it possible to release all men from the necessity of labor, would there be any reason to hope, that the amount of happiness would be increased? In the present state of society, who is the most virtuous, and who partakes most fully of earthly felicity—the man

of wealth and leisure, or the industrious husbandman? Should we survey the manners of the idle masters of slaves in the tropical climates, could we think, that they are as uncontaminated, pure, and virtuous, as the hardy cultivators of the soil, where slavery is unknown?

It may well be doubted whether, with the present relative power of virtue and vice in the world, there would be any moral advantage in the diminution of the necessity of labor. If the man of leisure is likely to suffer his faculties to rust in indolence; or if, when excited to action, his course is likely to be ungoverned and disastrous; it were better for him and for the community, that he should be subjected to constant and innocent toil. If, however, while mechanical philosophy shall create leisure for men, they shall be taught to live for objects, for which only life is of any value; then the influence of mechanism, or of labor-saving inventions and improvements, will be favorable to the world. But in mere leisure, by reason of the easy supply of physical wants,—in leisure, unguided and unemployed in wise mental and moral pursuits,—there is no promise of good.

3. The influence of *General Education* and the prevalence of *Free Institutions* through the earth, however important, will not alone secure the happiness of man. Never perhaps was there so great confidence as at the present moment in the power of education. When the unthinking people shall be roused to thought, and their wild, uninstructed children shall be trained up in various useful branches of learning, then, it has been supposed, the golden age

will come. There are doubtless important effects, which would result from the general diffusion of knowledge. Men, now ground to the dust, if they become enlightened and discern their natural rights, and perceive how they have been despoiled of them, will cast off the yoke of debasing servitude. Old and flagrant abuses will no longer be tolerated. Could all the inhabitants of Europe be made intelligent, and have before them in distinct vision the miserable degradation, to which they are reduced, not by any necessity of nature, but by the sensuality, the vanity, the pride, the ambition of their rulers, and particularly by the spirit of war, which in the last fifty years has expended five thousand millions of dollars, and which annually extorts from them five hundred millions of dollars for the support of the pageantry and murder of several millions of soldiers; think you, that they would approve of a system, which overwhelms them with the most oppressive taxes? Think you, that half a million of intelligent, undeluded, unenslaved men would, at the call of a demon-spirit, march into the wilds of Russia to perish by cold, and famine, and the avenging sword? Could the beams of knowledge be poured upon the mind of the Turk, would he any longer, cheerfully and as a matter of duty, yield his neck to the sultan's scimeter; or would he not be likely to strike for liberty? But oppression is only one of the evils, to which the family of man is subjected; and such is the condition of the world, that sometimes submission to injustice is a matter of prudence, and resistance often aggravates the misery, which it aims to remove.

In countries, already free, useful knowledge may easily be diffused among the people, and great improvements may be made in the methods of education; but perhaps with an entire failure of the grand anticipated results. If with the culture of the mind there should be no culture of the heart; if a moral and religious influence is to be banished from our schools and colleges; if man, an immortal being, shall study only the laws of the material world, and overlook his relation to God and to the scenes of eternity; if he is taught every thing excepting that, which it is ineffably the most important, that he should understand; then we shall find, that a new and terrible energy is given to unholy passion, and, although knowledge is power, that undirected, misapplied, perverted power is an object of dread.

For the advantages of *civil liberty* in our country we have great occasion of gratitude to God. Our rulers proceed from ourselves, and are responsible to the people. The church is distinct from the state. Our ministers of religion are not titled dignitaries, with princely incomes,—idle shepherds, who care not for the flock, yet clothe themselves with the fleece, dyed in scarlet. Our ministers, happily for our country, are *working men*; not working in the cause of superstition and delusion, but in the cause of the people and in the cause of God; and every man is allowed to worship God agreeably to the dictates of his own conscience, and is under no compulsion to support any form of religion whatever. The Jew and the Mahommedan may live among us undisturbed; the infidel and the atheist have nothing to fear excepting from truth, and their own conscience, and God.

Never can we be sufficiently grateful to Heaven, that we behold the temple of liberty rising in fair proportions, capacious, easy of access, an asylum to the oppressed of all nations. But while the people are free from external restraint, are they also free from the malignant influence of party, and the sway of unholy passions? Is there not something else necessary to their happiness besides the knowledge and enjoyment of their natural rights, and the protection of the most perfect government on the face of the earth? Have we not seen, and do we not see in our country exemplified and verified, the maxim, that "party or faction is the madness of many for the benefit of a few?" We are apt to attach great importance to the party distinctions, which have prevailed since the adoption of the federal constitution. The success or the defeat of a particular party has been thought to have a decided bearing on the welfare of the community and the great interests of republican liberty. But on this point listen to an eminent statesman, who says, "Our collisions of principle have been little, very little more, than conflicts for place." Such is the humiliating result of the experience and observation, for forty years, of one, who has witnessed all the conflicts of party, and has occupied the highest place in the government of the United States.

If this be a true account of the past, then is it not probable that, unless some new influence be felt, the future will resemble it, and that hereafter, as heretofore, the earnest struggles of party will be struggles for office? Our citizens will be arrayed against each other for bitter conflict; but the end will be like that of most of the wars, which have ravaged the earth;

after the battle is over, at the expense of the hardships and sufferings of the combatant dupes and slaves, a few men, their leaders and masters, will reap all the little honor and profit of the warfare. Were this evil remediless, it were idle to dwell upon it; but a cure may be found in the diffusion of *moral and religious instruction*, in connexion with literary and scientific improvement. Let there be a firm and immovable principle of Christian virtue, conjoined with intelligence, among the people, and they will prefer the triumph of right to that of party, and they will ask for no other victory but that of truth. A calm and virtuous mind will detect the imposture of the pretended patriot, who speaks much of the public good, meaning only his own. To the man of covetousness and greedy ambition, what is the peace of the community?—what are the great interests of morality and order, of virtue and religion? The welfare of the people is the pretence, the lure; but self is the moving power. Let the people be disciplined in virtue; let a spirit of mutual kindness and good-will govern them instead of a spirit of scorn, and hatred, and defiance; and they will not suffer themselves to become the instruments, by which the unprincipled and worthless may lift themselves to office and power. Let them unite virtue with intelligence; and then will the wholesome laws be uniformly carried into effect.

But were the energy of our laws always sustained; were our magistrates always men of upright, noble, disinterested views, having no aim but the public welfare; what is the amount of good, which would spring from this perfection of government, but this, that the facilities of procuring a subsistence or of acquiring

wealth are increased, and that the people are protected in the enjoyment of their rights? Let it be, that a good government will shield from injustice the lowest as well as the highest; let it be, that such a government will shut out the losses, the corrupting influence, the desolating miseries of war. But can government stay the destroying plague, which, in its march from India, has trampled on the lives of fifty millions, and has come to our shores? Or can government stay the prevalence of error and vice, which infect our whole atmosphere, predisposing and preparing victims for eternal death? No. This freedom from sin and consequent misery is not the direct result of government; but of the truth of God. The gospel must come with its purifying energy to the hearts of mankind, or the deadly plague of sin will still prevail, and its victims will be cast out from the holy universe into the deep and horrible pit.

4. The confidence which is placed in *Philosophy* for the advancement of human happiness, will be found fallacious. If even the general education of the people will not of itself secure the public welfare; what shall we think of those grand anticipations of human improvement and perfectibility, which are founded upon the progress of science among the learned? Are they any thing more, than the creations of fancy? The most learned nations, nations which have been the most prolific of philosophers, have not always been the most virtuous and happy. Science has ever been attended with a corruption of manners. It might be an error to regard them as bearing the relation of cause and effect. Both may

have a common origin in a high degree of civilization and national prosperity, affording, on the one side, leisure and opportunity for intellectual culture in minds eager for philosophical inquiry; and, on the other side, furnishing scope for depraved and degrading indulgence. Who is not aware, that some of the most learned men have been abandoned to enormous vices? And who is not aware also, that, among nations holding a proud rank in science, the moral virtues have been, like the plants in a sandy desert, rarely seen, and, when seen, struggling for life in the arid plain and under a parching sun?

Of all the sciences of the present day the most boastful as to its effect on human happiness is *Political Economy*. Its aim is the production and distribution of wealth: but is wealth the highest good of man? Let it be, that this science may lead to the abrogation of many absurd laws, which put chains upon human activity, and may teach the few, who have leisure for its study, to add wisely to their individual wealth. But can political economy ever abrogate that law of God, which is stamped upon the condition of man, and which subjects him to the necessity of procuring his bread by the sweat of his face? Can the six hundred millions of men live without food, and clothing, and habitations?—and will the stubborn earth yield its fruit, without human labor, at the call of political economy?—or, while the hand of man is idle, will the prolific ocean deliver its finny tribes upon the shore for our subsistence? Though the wheel and the loom may move without human power,—yet can the materials for clothing be raised and collected by the magic of science, or will the

rocks, and the clay, and the trees of the forest fashion themselves into houses for indolent, happy man? Political economy has for a few years past been the pride of Great Britain. What has it effected? Let the ten thousands of the degraded and starving population of Britain, who have been poured upon our shores in pursuit of work and of bread, bear witness.

It is *Metaphysical Philosophy*, which peculiarly and emphatically claims the name of philosophy, and which in different ages has called forth the utmost efforts of men of the most powerful intellect. If the truth makes men free, how can philosophy have any effect in promoting the liberation of man, unless it be true? And what has been the character of human philosophy? What has been its relation to truth? What have been the proud *theories*, which learned, contemplative men have constructed by the toil of years, and what have been most of the celebrated *schools*, which have succeeded each other from age to age down even to the present day, but theories and schools of error and folly? What shall we think of the system of *Pantheism*, which makes all nature, all worlds, every plant and animal, a part of God? and what of the opposite system, which asserts, in the metaphysical language, an *absolute unity*, exclusive of all plurality, and which regards the world as having merely a shadowy existence, and our relation to it as an illusion? Yet for these theories have learned philosophers in different ages contended,—for a world without a God and Creator, or for a God without a world;—for a visible God to the denial of spirit, or for an invisible God to the denial of matter.

What shall we think of a philosophy, which wastes its strength in the discussion of *Ideas* as the eternal essence of things residing in absolute intelligence, and as general existences, which make the foundation of all true knowledge? Yet such was the philosophy of Plato, which still clouds the minds of many learned men. What shall we think of the philosophy, which asserts that pain is no evil? or of that, which says that motion is impossible, and that nothing is certain excepting its own skepticism? What shall we think of the philosophy, which asserts that all human volitions result from causes beyond the control of man, who is thus made a machine, instead of being a moral agent, and which infers, that man has no occasion for the sentiment of remorse, and cannot be exposed to future punishment? Yet such is the doctrine of modern Socinianism and of ancient materialism. The same philosophy is that of Kapila in India, maintaining, that our determination or volition, which we imagine to be free, is only a necessary effect, thus subjecting man to fatalism. We might let huge errors or absurdities pass unnoticed, were they harmless; but if philosophical theories, which God permits in order to humiliate the pride of reason, are perilous to morals and religion, then it is time to examine the foundation, on which they are built. If the ancient atomists deduced from the doctrine of fatalism consequences unfriendly to virtue; if the same consequences were deduced by the materialists of India; if the infidels of France and Great Britain have as an inference denied the guilt of man or transferred it to God; if Socinianism concludes confidently, that the necessarian has no cause for self-reproach; and if modern

universalism, in its influence blasting to morals and piety, derives all the nourishment at its root from the conceit, that God absolutely and irresistibly forms every man's sinful character; then surely they, who hold to the doctrine of necessity, must have a difficult task to prove, that all these conclusions, in which men of different ages and nations and intellect and moral character have concurred, are really illegitimate deductions, and that man, though bound in chains of iron, walks forth unshackled, free, and moveable as the air of heaven.

The present most distinguished philosopher in France, after describing the succession of what he deems the four great and best systems, into which the philosophy of every age may be resolved, *sensualism*, *idealism*, *skepticism*, and *mysticism*,—all, in his opinion, very good and useful, though in part erroneous,—comes to this conclusion, which strikes as with a thunderbolt the pretensions of philosophy,—“Error is the law of our nature; we are condemned to error; and in all our opinions, in all our words, there is a great mixture of error and even of absurdity.” Such is the sentence, which the eloquent lecturer at Paris pronounces upon the host of philosophers, who have preceded him for three thousand years. His own attempt to present an eclectic system, in which the wheat is winnowed from the chaff, shows very clearly, that his sentence upon others is not inapplicable to himself. Such is the judgment of a distinguished metaphysical philosopher: “Error is the law of our nature.” But Jesus Christ says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. He that believeth in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

After examining the history of philosophy in the different ages of the world one is constrained to believe, that, by the wild, contradictory, incredible, monstrous philosophical systems, which have risen one upon the ruins of another, it has been the purpose of Providence to “stain the pride” of human reason, and to show to the universe, that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” The mere philosophy of man is thus brought into contempt, that the revelation from God might be honored, and that men might see the wisdom of receiving with the docility and the implicit confidence of children the instructions, which their omniscient Father has given them.

The conclusion from this survey of philosophy is this,—we must come to the Bible as the fountain of moral and religious wisdom. When the Scriptures are proved to be the word of God, and the plain, obvious meaning of the revelation from heaven is unfolded; when the truth is thus brought to the mind of the sinner; then and then only can we hope to see the blessings of salvation descend upon the soul. Philosophy is powerless in this work of saving. If it does not lead down to hell, it can never guide up to heaven. The Bible, the Bible only, contains the true philosophy, which, accompanied by the Divine Spirit, reconciles man to God, changes the depraved character into the form of excellence, and conducts the poor child of mortality through the dark valley of death to mansions of eternal light and glory.

5. The general happiness of the world can never be secured by *Irreligion*, nor by any erroneous and *Corrupt Form of Religion*.

What has been accomplished by *atheism* and *infidelity* for the benefit of mankind? You may learn by looking at ancient *Rome*, when the restraints of superstition were loosened by the prevalence of the atheistic system; for soon the general dissolution of manners destroyed the foundations of public order, and despotic power rose upon the ruins. From the horrors of the revolution in *France*, at the close of the last century, it is impossible to separate the systems of atheism and infidelity, which, by the banishment of all moral restraints, had prepared the minds of men for every enormity of crime. A decided and thorough spirit of irreligion pervaded the people. Infidelity extinguished the fear of God; it resigned conscience to passion; it rescued no victim from the bloodthirsty aspirant, nor lifted a voice of mercy against the ferocious madness of the times. No. It is not by denying a God, a Providence, a future reckoning, an eternal judgment, that the dagger is wrested from the hand of the assassin; that property is secured against the grasp of covetousness; and that the pollution of universal lust is changed into purity and honor. There must be a divine law of unchanging rectitude, and a stern sanction, which is competent to bend the iron sinew of pride, and to bring the terrors of eternal justice to bear upon the solicitations of appetite, and the otherwise indomitable energies of passion.

Infidelity in Great Britain and America is seen in a different point of view from the public theatre, on which it was displayed in France; its appropriate influence is to be sought in the professed principles and in the more private lives of the masters of the school. In their lives we shall find either degrading vices and

crimes, or a dearth of the great and generous virtues; and in their doctrines we shall find loose moral instructions, accommodated to the unholy passions of the heart, and designed to fortify the depraved spirit in its hostility to the pure and perfect law of God. It has been manifested and proved to the world, that the system of infidelity, by denying the righteous government of God and the rewards and punishments of eternity, subverts the foundation of morals; that it breaks down the distinction between right and wrong, substituting every man's variable judgment in the place of the immutable standard of heaven; that under powerful temptations to crime, arising from insatiable cupidity or raging ambition, it removes, if there be a prospect of present impunity, all restraint; and that it cherishes an absorbing egotism or vanity, an unpitying ferocity, and an unbridled sensuality, by the indulgence of which the tranquillity and happiness of society are laid waste.

Paganism is the great parent of iniquity and of unutterable abominations among several hundreds of millions of the human family. Shall we ask for truth, for instance, from the religion of India? Among the sects of the Brahminic system, to which shall we apply? Shall we ask the followers of Vishnoo, of Siva, or of Bramhu? The voice, that responds to us, will speak of numerous forms and incarnations of male and female gods; of successive annihilations and reproductions of all created existence, including the gods; of interminable and ridiculous fables; and of idolatrous and shameless worship, which in a Christian country cannot even be named. Shall we ask for virtue, purity, goodness, from the religion of In-

dia? Alas, the question will excite only a smile. Indian idolatry is drenched in pollution, and the idolatry of every other country is associated with crime and misery.

Mohamedanism is the religion of sensuality and of violence, awakening the spirit of scorn instead of a spirit of benevolence, and cherishing with the utmost care and as the first object the ferocious energies of war. Ignorant, degraded, profligate, enslaved Turkey exhibits at the present day the benefits, which the world may expect from Islamism: the millions, who have perished by the sabre of the prophet and his followers, could they rise from the dead, would speak aloud of the character and tendency of the Mohamadan religion.

Romanism has set up an authority on the earth, which comes in the place of God, and exhibits an ecclesiastical monarch at Rome, often of a notoriously profligate character, who, either by himself or a council, claims the right of settling for the whole human race the faith of the understanding and the decisions of conscience, and which thus would enslave to ambition, pride, lust, and covetousness the intellect and moral feelings of all mankind. Popery appears under the double aspect of a frightful persecuting power, and the teacher of most pernicious and fatal error. In its history we may see mingled the flames of persecution, the blood of the martyrs, the tortures of the inquisition, the various massacres of heretics, with the idolatry, covetousness, pollution, pride, and horrible crimes, which have marked the seat of the beast on the seven-hilled "eternal city." Is the dread of popery an idle apprehension, produced by a bugbear?

We trust, it may be so soon. It may be so now, in some Protestant countries: it may be so in our own. But popery has been in past ages, and is still, in many nations, a most terrific power. We may indeed look without trembling on the yellow-maned lion of Africa, who is brought to America in a strong cage. But on his native sands, where he roams in majesty king of the desert, there is neither man nor beast, that can abide his roaring. Has not the foot of the pope trodden on the neck of monarchs? It was but a few years before the French revolution, that the degraded, enslaved states of Europe annually poured into the treasury of the Roman church more than two millions of dollars, while the revenue of the papal territory itself was three millions, making an income to the pretended vicar of Jesus Christ of five millions annually. Had the pope been indeed the vicar of Jesus Christ, with this sum annually put into his hands, it would seem, that in any period of half a century it would have been in his power to have sent out such an agency of truth, as would have converted the whole family of man to the Christian faith, and made this desolate earth as the paradise of God. But instead of being employed in building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the revenue of the Catholic church has been wasted in supporting the regal splendor of the servant of servants; in providing for his *nephews*, as a nearer relationship is conveniently expressed; in purchasing curious works of art; in building splendid churches and palaces; in keeping up a standing army, and in carrying on war; and the consequence is, that this *god* on the earth is now burthened with a public debt of a hundred millions of dollars, which he will never

be able to pay. Popery, as to its physical power, is now comparatively weak. Its spiritual dominion also has been much curtailed by the resistance of reason and common sense to absurdity and tyranny, resulting, from the want of Protestant light, in a wide-spread infidelity in the Catholic countries of Europe. Still a great part of the people of Europe know nothing of the Christian religion but in that new form of idolatry, into which it has been cast by the great magician at Rome. And who is not aware, that popery exerts in no country a powerful moral influence, and that the history of the past forbids the hope, that it will ever be able to meliorate the condition of the pagan nations of the earth? We may hope, that at no remote period, as the authority of Romanism sinks into contempt, and the judgments of God strike the guilty city, the kings of the earth, whose fetters shall be broken, will say,—*Alas, alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.* Then will the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, saying, *alas, alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to naught.* And then will all, who love the truth, say,—*Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.*

The various forms of error among the *Protestant* Christian sects cannot be pointed out. Happily, most of the principal sects have a considerable degree of harmony in respect to the most essential articles of their faith. If some sects deny the great and essential doctrines of the Gospel, and discharge the con-

science of the sinner from the dread of future retribution;—we cannot be ignorant, that their errors have no tendency to restrain men from criminal indulgence, nor to lead them to the abandonment of iniquity, nor to excite them to the generous toils of a self-denying charity, without which the face of the earth will never be renewed.

Thus it is obvious that civilization, mechanical invention, intellectual culture, government, philosophy, and false religion are incompetent to secure the happiness of man.

II. The GOSPEL *has power* to liberate enslaved man, and to render him holy and happy.

That, when the earth was the abode of error and crime, and the unhappy race of man was corrupt and lost, God so loved the world as to send his Son, the brightness of his glory, by whom he created the universe, down from heaven to appear in the form of man as the minister of his mercy,—to expiate sin by his death upon the cross,—to rise from the dead as a victorious king,—and to disclose the laws, truths, and motives, pure, sublime, and energetic, by which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the human character is transformed, and depraved man is made the friend of God,—seem to be the chief elementary principles of the religion of Christ.

1. The power of the Gospel is seen in the nature of its instructions. The Gospel frowns upon and banishes those *pernicious maxims* of conduct, by which the peace of society is destroyed and communities are laid waste. The eager thirst for honor, the

insatiable ambition, which preys on many a mind often leading to the commission of great crimes, and in a powerful monarch leading to the destruction of thousands or millions of lives in war, is not tolerated by the Christian morality. The honor, which cometh from God, may be sought, but not the honor, which cometh from man. In like manner the maxims of retaliation and revenge are condemned; and instead of being devoted to the busy cares of covetousness, occasioning injustice, fraud, and oppression, men are required to toil chiefly for incorruptible treasures.

Besides interdicting all false principles, the Gospel makes known and enjoins *right rules* of conduct, the observance of which by all men would completely change the face of human affairs. Were the precepts universally obeyed,—“As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them;” “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;”—much of the complicated machinery of government would be superseded and rendered useless. As no wrongs would be suffered, so there would be none to be redressed. Courts might be generally abolished; prison-houses pulled down; chains, and bars, and bolts thrown away. Wise legislators might certainly rest from many of their labors, together with scheming politicians and subtle statesmen; and the affairs of the world would go on prosperously without the pageantry of a court and a throne.

It is to be considered also that the gospel, in order to promote virtue and consequent happiness, not only prescribes right rules of conduct, but also presents *motives* to obedience, powerful at all times and in all circumstances. The fine-spun theories of moralists

relating to the beauty of virtue and the fitness of things are at once brushed away by any strong temptation. Even a regard to present interest is often borne down by violent passion. But the gospel demands obedience with the threatening of everlasting punishment, and invites to holiness with the promise of everlasting joy and glory. Its influence is felt in all the conditions of our being, binding the soul in secret as well as in public, addressing with authority the reason and conscience, warning of a greater evil than death, and urging to the resolute performance of duty in the midst of scorn, obloquy, and persecution, with a firm confidence in the promised favor of the Almighty.

There is one peculiar principle of action inspired by the gospel of amazing efficacy; and that was announced by the apostle, when he said, "the love of Christ constraineth us." When the sinner, condemned and perishing, becomes a true believer in the crucified Son of God; when by faith he is redeemed, pardoned, justified; when he is led forth from his prison by the hand of his Savior, and through grace breathes the air of freedom; his heart swells with unutterable emotions of gratitude and love to his great Deliverer, and he is impelled to live, not unto himself, but unto Jesus Christ, who loved him and died for him. This is the principle, which causes liberality to abound even in the depth of poverty; this is the principle, which carries the missionary of the cross to the heathen, and the martyr to the stake, and which in every age, since the gospel was made known, has achieved the wonders of beneficence, that have surpassed the comprehension of a selfish world.

While the gospel produces the character of true virtue, it also confers permanent felicity on those, who feel its influence. Under the unavoidable trials of their condition, in poverty, affliction, and sickness, it gives them submission to the correcting but merciful hand of God. The raging passions, which cause much of the misery of men, are quieted. The fury of the tempest is converted into a calm. The selfish toils of men are changed to the honorable and joyous labors of charity, which bring their own reward with them.

But the gospel also inspires the loftiest hopes of interminable good beyond the grave—of new and perpetual discoveries of God's character—of pleasures, *which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the imagination conceived*—of glorious visions of the grace and mercy of Him, who died for sinners, and who is altogether lovely—and of communion with all that is venerable, and holy, and majestic in the universe. Under the inspiration of such hopes the Christian meets the king of terrors without dismay. He goes down into the grave, as the Ceylon diver after pearls plunges into the wave, with the certainty of coming up, loaded with treasures, to behold the splendors of heaven.

2. The gospel has already *wrought a great change* in the condition of the world, and, when its influence shall be universal, all nations will be made virtuous and blessed. The power of the Christian religion, it is well known, has changed many of the evil customs of the world. It has abolished many cruel superstitions, and banished many enormous crimes; it has cast

down the idols from their pedestals, and purified the temple of worship; it has mitigated the ferocity of war; it has broken the fetters of the slave; it has made provision for the poor, and established hospitals for the sick; it has promoted civilization, refinement, learning, charity, and every thing, that tends to enlarge the mind and ennoble the character. In this country, which owes its form of government to the early Christians of New-England, it has created for ten millions of men free institutions, which are perceptibly spreading their leaven through the earth.

When the influence of the gospel shall be universal, the horrible superstitions and crimes, by which the earth is desolated, will no longer exist. There will be no more sacrifices of purity and of life in the service of idolatry. No man will be found lifting his hand against his brother. No covetous hard-hearted oppressor will catch the poor man in his net. There will be none, who trade in the flesh and blood of their fellows. No throne of iniquity will be supported, no proud despot will reign over outraged and degraded subjects. When Jesus Christ shall have dominion *from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth*, there will be peace to all people; the rude and boisterous passions will be quelled; the tempest of war will no longer sweep over the globe; the King in Zion will *judge the poor of the people: he will save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor*. When the Son shall make men free, they will be *free indeed*.

Nor is there any other hope for the world. God is wiser than man. Infinite benevolence and wisdom have devised and disclosed the way of human im-

provement. The rational offspring of God must be assimilated to their Creator. Intelligent and moral agents must be enlightened by the truth, and persuaded to choose the right and to practise holiness. The perfect laws of the universe must be obeyed, or happiness will take its flight from the earth. Other hopes will fail: The fine-woven theories of perfectibility, not associated with religion, will prove but webs of gossamer. Even in our own country, the boasted intelligence of the people, if unallied to goodness, will be found inadequate to the security of the public welfare. If we stand before God as his enemies, with the stain of national crimes unavenged and tolerated, he will punish us; we shall have, like other nations, our retribution upon the earth: nor are the instruments of punishment difficult to be found; the angel of the pestilence may breathe upon us; the tempest may spread desolation around; angry, ambitious spirits may dissever the bonds of our union; our fields may be reddened with the blood of civil war. Should we be ripe for ruin, God cannot fail to find instruments for our destruction.

No; it is not by the wisdom of statesmen and legislators; it is not by civil institutions, by the checks and balances of the powers of government, by laws and courts, by armies and navies, that the peace, and order, and happiness of mankind can be secured, and crime and suffering banished from the world. By these the flame may be smothered for a while, but it will again burst out. These expedients have been tried, and what has been the result? The history of mankind is but the history of crime and misery. It is the history of cruel superstitions and debasing idol-

atries. It is the history of pride, envy, malignity, and ferocious ambition. It is the history of perpetual wars, by which fields have been ravaged, cities plundered and burnt, and countless millions of infuriated men swept from the earth. It is the history of crimes and iniquities of every hue; of inhuman oppressions and fiend-like tortures; of secret assassinations, and of more open and what are called honorable murders; of frauds, thefts, and robberies; of secret slanders, bitter revilings, and savage contests; of headlong gaming, besotting intemperance, profligate indulgence, and heaven-daring blasphemy. Make a true survey of the past history and the present condition of mankind, including our own favored country, and then say, whether there is any remedy for the miseries of the world but in the pure gospel of the Son of God.—

1. It may be inferred from these considerations, that we are bound to make *the most strenuous and unceasing exertions* to spread the gospel through the world. The bonds of our common nature oblige us to this charity. Our Master says to us,—“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” There is no way, by which the lost children of men can be saved, except by the knowledge of *the truth*; and there is no appointed way, by which the truth is to be spread through the earth, except by human effort. What if, in the spirit of Mohamedanism, we could send armies of well accoutred and brave Christians to all the nations, and, with the alternative of conversion or death, subdue them to the Christian profession? Would this set them free from error and sin? What if, in the spirit of Romanism, we could

subject all the tribes and families of man to the papal yoke, and impose on every forehead the Roman mark? This would not be conferring liberty. The beams of truth must come upon the darkness of the mind. Hence it is, that in our Protestant endeavors to propagate the gospel we send the Bible to the nations, and that we send out religious tracts,—those little lights, which revolve round the great central orb, the glorious sun in the firmament, the BIBLE. And hence it is, that we educate young men to explain the Bible, and that we send them out, not to make converts to a shadow,—not to baptize ignorance and superstition into the Christian name,—but to “*teach* all nations” the great truths and duties of the kingdom of Christ. For we believe, that it is Christian truth, and that only, which can save men; not the knowledge of natural or political science, but the knowledge of the relation of man to God, of the law and government of God, of the mercy of God in the amazing scheme of redemption; of the judgment of the great day, and of eternal retribution; the knowledge of those truths, which will subdue the violence of passion, and turn the energies of the soul from the pursuit of the low trifles of earth to the pursuit of the honor of God, of the welfare of immortal beings, and of the everlasting glories of heaven.

But these truths are to be communicated by the effort of man; and what it is the duty of the whole church to promote, it is the duty of every individual to promote according to his ability. It seems to be the purpose of God to accomplish all his great designs on the earth in such a manner, by the efforts of individual Christians, as to combine the perfection of their

own character with the enlargement of his holy kingdom. This is the honor, to which we are all invited,—to toil for God, and at the same moment to rise in resemblance to him and in preparation for the immortal bliss of his presence in heaven. Christians are to attain to new purity, elevation, and energy; and, as a sure consequence and glad reward, they will see the cause of their Redeemer spreading and triumphing.

If money is requisite for the conversion of the world; the silver and the gold are God's. He might have touched the heart of one man in our country and from his single accumulations have poured, in the present year, into the treasury of Christian enterprise from ten to fifteen millions of dollars. But it was not the will of God in this manner to supersede the self-denying offerings of a multitude of believers, who are poor in this world, though rich in faith. Instead of such a splendid bequest we may look at a nobler spectacle, that of seventeen thousand poor *Moravians*, who, with the aid of a few friends in Europe and America, now support above forty missionary establishments, originating in the purest benevolence, and conducted by a strong faith in the power of Jesus. Here is an example of obedience to the command of Christ;—a model for the imitation of the church. Shall not American Christians generally go and do likewise, and, in the proportion of their numbers and wealth, enlarge those holy enterprises, which send out truth and happiness to the world, and bring back to the conscience sweet peace and heavenly joy?

2. While the truth is communicated, the strength of the depravity, which it is designed to subdue,

should impress us with *the necessity of divine power* to give efficacy to truth; and a view of the promises of God should lead us to seek and expect the exertion of that power. Whoever may plant or water, it is Jehovah only, who giveth the increase. It is not light alone, though always necessary to moral action, which can change the heart. Is the devil ignorant of the great principles of Christianity? Is it supposable, that he can have any shadow of doubt, that Jesus Christ died upon the cross in order to expiate the sins of the world, and to destroy *his* works and kingdom? Yet he remains the adversary. And so it is with the heart of the sinner. Light may shame and may terrify him; but, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, it will not convert him. We see on the earth, we see every day among respectable citizens, the same hostility to God's truth, which rages in the world beneath; and it is indicated by contempt, scorn, ridicule, uncharitable surmises, malignant accusations, and flagrant acts of injustice. To rouse up by solemn words of terror a slumbering conscience, and to array conscience against unyielding pride, or any predominant and cherished sinful passion, is to enkindle the rage of the depraved heart; and the most humble and benevolent teacher of God's truth will be accused of priestcraft, of planning a union of church and state, of wishing to destroy political freedom, and to domineer over the imprescriptible rights of man. If such is the resistance to truth in a country, where republican liberty protects the preacher from violence; in other countries the same resistance of the heart will arm itself with the power of persecution. How can the truth anywhere triumph without the interposing grace and con-

verting energy of the Almighty? And that grace, we are assured, is adequate to the conversion of every sinner, whose obstinate rebellion it may be the purpose of God to subdue. Let all Christians, then, pray most earnestly to God that he will cause his *kingdom to come*.

When Paul and Silas, in the dungeon at Philippi, prayed to God, the numerous prisoners heard the appeal of those righteous young men to the Almighty, and immediately there was a great earthquake, which shook the foundations of the prison, and burst open the massy doors, while at the same moment every prisoner was disencumbered of his fetters. Christians! pray in earnestness to your God, and the great prison-house of idolatry, and delusion, and error, and iniquity in this world will tremble to its deep foundations; every strong, iron-bolted door will fly open; and the startled prisoners, dropping their chains, will rise up in astonishment the *freemen* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. In the success, which has already attended missionary efforts, we have grounds of *encouragement* to engage with new zeal in the attempt to bring the whole world in subjection to the law of Christ. No one, acquainted with the history of the world, can be ignorant, that the efforts of Romanism have been very ineffectual in respect to the enlightening of the minds and the purifying of the hearts and lives of the heathen. The pope has long had at Rome a college for the propagation of the faith, and several of the sects and orders of Romanism have sent out missionaries to different parts of the world,—to Syria, to

Egypt, to Ethiopia, to India, to China, to Paraguay, to Mexico, to Canada; and many of these missionaries have been men of learning, who wrote interesting descriptions of the countries they visited. But of all, that has been accomplished by the Catholic missionaries on the face of the earth, scarcely a fragment of good remains. The reason is, that their system of new idolatry has not the capacity of contending with more ancient idolatry, and that their labors have not been directed to the communication of the simple, uncorrupted truths of the gospel. A few Protestant missionaries in a small spot of the earth have within thirty years past accomplished more for the overthrow of idolatry and for the illumination and renovation of the dark-minded and depraved heathen, than all, that has been accomplished, during three hundred years past, by all the missionaries, which Romanism has employed. Do you doubt this? Repair then to an island of the Pacific ocean, and compare the present condition of its inhabitants with their depravity and wretchedness, before the English missionaries went to them with the message of God's mercy in the gospel, and you will now call it "an island of the blest." Or repair to another cluster of islands, occupied at a more recent period by our American brethren. The sudden change from horrible crimes to Christian virtue, from abject misery to pure and heavenly joy, is almost too wonderful for belief. We have in the condition of these islands an emblem of the happy state of the world, when Jesus shall make all men free;—free from idolatry, superstition, error;—free from pride, ambition, malignity, avarice, and lust;—free from crime, and guilt, and wo.

But we need not limit our views to the islands of the Pacific. God has given animating success to our missionary labors in other parts of the world,—especially in Ceylon, and among various tribes of our own Indians. At the fifty-five missionary stations of the Board there are thirty-six churches as lights in a dark place, having eighteen hundred members, who seem to be walking in the fear of God. More than twelve hundred schools are supported, containing about sixty thousand scholars. Eight presses are at work in eleven different languages. Thus is the seed sown, which, we may confidently hope, will in good time yield an abundant harvest.—But are sixty-eight preachers, with their companions and assistants, the whole amounting only to two hundred and thirty-seven, all that our three thousand Congregational and Presbyterian churches, having *three hundred thousand communicants*, ought to send out for the conversion of the world? Is the average of one third of a dollar to each communicant the proper limit of our contributions for the holiest, sublimest, dearest, and most blessed of all objects?

The spirit, with which we all should engage in the support of missions, and thus in the extension of the kingdom of Christ through the world, is the same spirit of faith, which animated the apostles, the martyrs, and the reformers of Christianity; the same spirit, which burned in the hearts of SWARTZ, of MAYHEW and ELIOT, of BRAINERD and WHEELLOCK, of VANDER KEMP, BUCHANAN, and MARTYN, and many others, who have toiled for the conversion of the world.

Let us hope that a new spirit of heavenly zeal will be awakened in our churches. Let us hope, that the race of such men as NEWELL and HALL, of MILLS and PARSONS and FISK, of RICHARDS and WARREN, who have entered into their rest, will ere long be increased tenfold. Let us hope, that in a few years the missionaries from America shall go out as the faithful preachers of the gospel to all the nations of the earth. Even now our well educated, noble-minded young men, accompanied with the grace and loveliness of woman, may be seen mingling with the savages of our western forests, breathing the sultry air of Hindostan, walking in the cinnamon groves of Ceylon, ascending the long rivers of Burmah, knocking at the gates of China, climbing the volcanic hills of the Pacific islands, encountering the pestilential atmosphere of Turkey, and the hot gales of Malta, sitting amidst the ruins of Athens, and dwelling near the sacred mountain of Lebanon,—not for the gratification of their taste as travellers, but as the laborious, self-denying teachers of Christ's truth to their brethren.

But I had forgotten two, who are in a more interesting position than any of these, and who, for confiding in the integrity and good faith of our general government, and preaching the gospel to the Cherokees, are now grinding in the prison-house, not of some eastern despot, but of an American free state, of Christian Georgia, which was originally settled for the avowed purpose of *doing good to the Indians*.*

* When Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia, commenced his settlement in 1733, he made a treaty with several tribes of the Indians, and told them, that he came "to settle among them for their benefit and instruction."

Let us hope, however, soon to see many of our young men,—fearless of great trials, and even rejoicing if counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus,—passing the Rocky Mountains of the west, and penetrating the vast plains of the south; contentedly sharing with the Greenlander in his coarse fare; reposing with the African in the shade of his palm-tree, or following, mounted on his camel, the hardy Moor in his marches through the desert; breathing the spices of Arabia, or wandering amid the flowering shrubs of Persia; accompanying the Tartar hordes in their migrations; passing the wall of China, and penetrating to the villages of its two hundred millions of people; approaching the throne of barbaric kings, and visiting the huts of the lowest of their subjects; gliding from island to island in all the seas of the east and the west; and everywhere assailing idolatry, conflicting with error, making known to men the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent; and by instruction, example, and prayer, conducting their grateful, happy brethren in the way to glory, honor, and immortality. But for the accomplishment of such a hope every Christian must do his duty. And to this we are called by a voice from the perishing heathen, which says—By the love of Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven and died for you and for us, by the hope, which ye cherish of awaking from the dead in his likeness, by the grace and mercy of God which ye have experienced, by the horrors of that awful destiny which ye have escaped, and by the glories of that eternal heaven which ye regard as your sure inheritance, we entreat you to send to us *the truth* as it is in Jesus,

that we also may be made *free*. Then, with you and with all the redeemed from among men, a great multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall we stand before the throne and before the Lamb, and join in the loud song,—“Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” AMEN.

PREACHERS
BEFORE THE
AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR
FOREIGN MISSIONS.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Place of meeting.</i>	<i>Preacher.</i>	<i>Text.</i>
1810.	Farmington.	no sermon.	
1811.	Worcester.	no sermon.	
1812.	Hartford.	no sermon.	
1813.	Boston.	*Timothy Dwight.	John 10: 16.
1814.	New-Haven.	James Richards.	Ephes. 3: 8.
1815.	Salem.	Calvin Chapin.	Ps. 96: 10.
1816.	Hartford.	Henry Davis.	Ps. 119: 96.
1817.	Northampton.	*Jesse Appleton.	1 Cor. 1: 21.
1818.	New-Haven.	*Samuel Spring.	Acts 8: 30, 31.
1819.	Boston.	*Joseph Lyman.	Isa. 58: 12.
1820.	Hartford.	Eliphalet Nott.	Mark 16: 15.
1821.	Springfield.	*Jedidiah Morse.	Ps. 2: 8.
1822.	New-Haven.	Alexander Proudfit.	Mal. 1: 11.
1823.	Boston.	Jeremiah Day.	Neh. 6: 3.
1824.	Hartford.	*Samuel Austin.	Gal. 1: 15, 16.
1825.	Northampton.	Joshua Bates.	John 8: 32.
1826.	Middletown.	Edward D. Griffin.	Mat. 23: 18, 20.
1827.	New-York.	Lyman Beecher.	Luke 11: 21, Rev. &c.
1828.	Philadelphia.	*John H. Rice.	2 Cor. 10: 4.
1829.	Albany.	Archibald Alexander.	Acts 11: 18.
1830.	Boston.	Thomas De Witt.	Mat. 9: 37, 38.
1831.	New-Haven.	Leonard Woods.	Isa. 62: 1, 2.
1832.	New-York.	William Allen.	John 8: 36.

